

## Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION EA-13

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ADP-00 PM-03 NSC-10 NSCE-00 CIAE-00

INR-10 NSAE-00 RSC-01 DODE-00 DPW-01 PRS-01 RSR-01

/055 W

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R 300948Z AUG 73

FM AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2795

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

CINCPAC

USSAG

S E C R E T PHNOM PENH 9113

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652 GDS

TAGS: PINT, CB

SUBJ: FAREWELL CALL ON PRIME MINISTER IN TAM

1. DURING MY FAREWELL CALL AUGUST 30 PRIME MINISTER IN TAM ASKED FOR MY VIEWS ON THE INTERNAL POLITICAL SITUATION AND WHETHER THE HIGH POLITICAL COUNCIL SHOULD BE RETAINED WHEN ITS PRESENT MANDATE EXPIRES IN OCTOBER.

2. I STRESSED THAT WE CONTINUE TO BELIEVE THAT THE HIGH POLITICAL COUNCIL IS AN IMPORTANT SYMBOL OF THE SOLIDARITY OF THE PRINCIPAL FOUNDERS OF THE REPUBLIC BOTH IN CAMBODIA AND ABROAD AND SHOULD BE RETAINED BEYOND OCTOBER UNLESS THERE IS SOME EXTRAORDINARY CHANGE IN THE SITUATION. NOTING THAT IT HAD NOT FUNCTIONED AS EFFECTIVELY AS INTENDED, I COMMENTED THAT IT NEVERTHELESS HAD BEEN A USEFUL DEVICE FOR BRINGING MEN OF DIVERGENT VIEWS TOGETHER AND AS A FORUM FOR THE EXPRESSION OF THOSE VIEWS.

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3. THE PRIME MINISTER REMARKED THAT THERE IS INCREASING

AGITATION FOR A CHANGE IN GOVERNMENT, BOTH AMONG MEMBERS OF THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY AND IN STUDENT CIRCLES. HE SAID THAT HE HAS BEEN SUCCESSFUL THUS FAR IN DAMPENING SPECULATION CONCERNING GOVERNMENTAL CHANGES AND IN SATISFYING SOME OF THE OPPOSITION THAT THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT IS DOING THE BEST IT CAN IN A DIFFICULT AND DANGEROUS SITUATION. I TOOK THIS OPPORTUNITY TO CONGRATULATE HIM ON HIS PERFORMANCE AS PRIME MINISTER, NOTING THAT DESPITE HIS INABILITY TO FUNCTION OVER AS WIDE A SPECTRUM AS HE HAD HOPED HE HAD BEEN AN INDISPENSABLE LINK BETWEEN THE HIGH POLITICAL COUNCIL AND THE KHMER IN THE STREET. I SAID THAT AS FAR AS MY GOVERNMENT IS CONCERNED WE WOULD BE HAPPY TO HAVE HIM CONTINUE AS PRIME MINSITER INDEFINITELY; IN ANY EVENT, HE SHOULD CONTINUE AS A MEMBER OF THE HIGH POLITICAL COUNCIL EVEN IF HE SHOULD COME AT SOME POINT TO REGARD HIS CONTINUATION IN THE GOVERNMENT INTOLERABLE.

4. I ALSO TOOK UP WITH IN TAM SEVERAL ITEMS OF CURRENT BUSINESS.

A) I EMPHASIZED THAT THE SUPPLY OF RICE FOR THE CAPITAL WILL BE EXHAUSTED BY ABOUT MID-OCTOBER UNLESS PROMPT AND REMEDIAL MEASURES ARE TAKEN AT ONCE. I SAID THAT IN OUR JUDGEMENT THESE INCLUDE (1) THE DISPATCH OF A DELEGATION TO TOKYO TO ARRANGE FOR THE ACQUISITION AND SHIPMENT OF THE 5,000 TONS OF RICE JAPAN HAS PROMISED THE GKR; (2) A RENEWED EFFORT TO PURCHASE, WITH USG FINANCING, 25,000 TONS OF RICE FRM THAILAND; (3) THE ESTABLISHMENT OF HIGHER PRICES TO PERMIT THE PURCHASE OF ADDITIONAL QUANTITIES OF DOMESTIC RICE WHICH WE UNDERSTAND ARE POSSIBLY AVAILABLE IN BATTAMBANG (8,000 TONS); AND (4) STEPS TO FURTHER RESTRICT THE DAILY DISTRIBUTION OF RICE IN THE CAPITAL UNTIL THESE ADDITIONAL SOURCES OF SUPPLY ARE CONFIRMED.

B) I ASKED HIM TO CONSIDER LOWERING THE CONSCRIPTION AGE FROM THE PRESENT 31 TO 35 YEAR BRACKET. HE REPLIED THAT MINISTER OF DEFENSE U SAY HAS BEEN ASKED TO SUBMIT A PROPOSAL FOR ACTION ALONG THESE LINES BUT AT THE SAME TIME HE REITERATED HSI STRONG BELIEF THAT EFFORTS TO ENFORCE CONSCRIPTION WILL BE DISRUPTIVE POLITICALLY AND QTE SEND GOOD MEN INTO THE MAQUIS UNQTE. I COMMENTED THAT I UNDERSTOOD THE POLITICAL PROBLEMS HE HAS WITH CONSCRIPTION BUT SOME WAY MUST BE FOUND TO MAKE IT REASONABLY EFFECTIVE IF ONLY AS A SPUR TO VOLUNTARY RECRUITMENT, WHICH

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WOULD PROBABLY CONTINUE TO SERVE AS THE PRINCIPAL SOURCE OF NEW MANPOWER FOR FANK.

C) WITH RESPECT TO UNIFORMS FOR THE FANK, I SAID THAT AS HE KNEW FROM MY LETTER OF AUGUST 27 WE THINK IT IMPERATIVE TO DEVELOP PRODUCTION OF UNIFORMS SO AS TO PRESERVE MAP FUNDS, WHICH ARE VERY SCARCE AND NEEDED FOR AMMUNITION AND NEW EQUIPMENT. IN TAM REPLIED THAT MINISTER OF PLAN KHY TAING LIN HAS BEEN TASKED TO CHAIR A GOVERNMENTAL COMMITTEE TO EXAMINE ALL FACETS OF THIS PROBLEM

AND THAT CONSULTATIONS WITH OUR MISSION CAN BEGIN SHORTLY.

D) REFERRING TO REPORTS THAT MORALE OF BOTH ARMY UNITS AND THE POPULATION IN KOMPONG CHAM IS FAIRLY LOW I ASKED IN TAM, A NATIVE AND FORMER GOVERNOR OF THE PROVINCE, TO CONSIDER MAKING AN EARLY VISIT TO THIS BELEAGUERED PROVINCIAL CENTER. HE PROMISED TO DO SO.

5. COMMENT. ALTHOUGH HE CONTINUES TO USE EVERY OCCASION TO RAIL AGAINST THE LACK OF DISCIPLINE AND DIRECTION OF FANK, WHOSE TROOPS HE ASSERTS CONTINUE TO PILLAGE THE FRIENDLY POPULATION IN AREAS UNDER FANK CONTROL, IN TAM DID NOT COMPLAIN ABOUT HIS SITUATION AT THIS MEETING, AND I RECEIVED THE SAME IMPRESSION AS ON AUGUST 19 THAT HE IS PREPARED TO REMAIN AS PRIME MINISTER AT LEAST FOR THE TIME BEING. HE REMAINS VERY SENSITIVE TO MEASURES WHICH COULD DEROGATE FROM HIS POPULARITY, NOTING WITH SOME BITTERNESS, FOR EXAMPLY, THE RECENT ACTION OF NATIONAL BANK GOVERNOR SOK CHHONG IN RAISING THE DOLLAR EXCHANGE RATE FROM 230 TO 250 RIELS (I REMONSTRATED WITH HIM ABOUT HIS ATTITUDE, CITING THE ABSOLUTE NECESSITY OF EMPLOYING THE EXCHANGE RATE TO INCREASE COUNTERPART EARNINGS AND THUS GOVERNMENT REVENUE). IN GENERAL, HOWEVER, HE SEEMS TO ACCEPT THE PROPOSITION THAT HE IS NEEDED AT THIS TIME AS AN INTERPRETER OF POLICIES TO THE PEOPLE AND AS A DEFENSE AGAINST GOVERNMENTAL CHANGES WHICH MIGHT BRING SIRIK MATAK AND HIS RIGHT-LEANING SUPPORTERS TO POWER.  
SWANK

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